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Halperin Alleges 4 Instances of CIA Exploiting the Media

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In at least four instances the Central Intelligence Agency exploited its relationship with foreign and American news media to improperly influence events and opinions in the United States, a noted CIA critic testified yesterday.

Morton H. Halperin, director of the Center for National Security Studies, a Washington-based organization critical of the intelligence community, told a House oversight subcommittee that, among other things, the CIA gave a false briefing to a representative of Time magazine on Chilean Marxist leader Salvador Allende and the political situation in Chile around the time of Allende's election as president.

A CIA copy of the briefing paper, portions of which Halperin obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, shows that it argued in considerable detail that Allende and his Chilean Communist Party sought to destroy the free press there. This Sept. 18, 1970, briefing, Halperin said, consisted of the same information the CIA was disseminating to its Latin American sources for use against Allende.

Particularly objectionable, Halperin said, were personal characterizations of Allende as a supporter of violence as a political necessity. It described him as an "extremely ambitious, very vain man . . . a symbol of sartorial splendor and capitalist amenities."

"Speaking before a disappointingly small rally in Santiago on Sept. 13," the paper said, "Allende told the audience that he and the Unidad Popular would paralyze the country if anyone tried to steal the 'people's' victory." The rally had obviously been called to intimidate those who might be thinking of blocking Allende's succession to the presidency, and his message of terror got through despite the small audience."

Halperin said this briefing was given even though other CIA analysts were suggesting that "no U.S. vital interests would be threatened by an Allende regime."

"Time requested a briefing," Halperin testified. "It was given a propaganda document by an official of the clandestine services. Such officials, in my view, consider contacts with the American press as 'operations' designed to foster the objectives of whatever covert activity they are engaged in . . . The image of Allende closing down the free press in Chile

depended on having that same image presented in Time magazine."

However, Allende had allowed the Chilean papers to publish. Within hours of his 1973 fall from power in a bloody military coup, the new ruling junta permanently closed the papers.

The Oversight Subcommittee of the House Intelligence Committee has been holding hearings on the relationship between the CIA and the news media.

The other three cases of CIA manipulation of American opinion through the press, according to Halperin, were CIA attempts to discredit critics of the Warren Commission report on the assassination of President Kennedy; CIA use of the murder of its Athens station chief, Robert Welch, to counter efforts to bring the CIA under tighter congressional control, and CIA efforts to discredit Elias Demetropoulos, a Greek journalist and business consultant who lives in Washington and who was a persistent critic of the Greek military junta.

Criticism of the Warren Commission conclusions, according to an April 1, 1967, CIA directive, "is a matter of concern to the U.S. government, including our organization," which "itself is directly involved: among other facts, we contributed information to the investigation."

"The aim of this dispatch," the directive continued, "is to provide material for countering and discrediting the claims of the conspiracy theorists, so as to inhibit the circulation of such claims in other countries."

Among the methods to be used, the directive said, "were to employ propaganda assets to answer and refute the attacks of the critics. Book reviews and feature articles are particularly appropriate . . ." The agency did manage to plant one article in The Spectator, a British magazine that Halperin said is widely read by Americans. The CIA also included information it considered derogatory about some of the critics.

In the Welch case, as has been previously reported, the CIA tried to link his death with the publication of his name in CounterSpy magazine. What the CIA did not make public, Halperin said, was that the CIA had warned Welch that he risked assassination unless he changed houses, because his house was well known as belonging to the CIA's station chief.

"That the stories [in the U.S. press] suggested that Counter Spy was responsible for his death," Halperin said, "was the result of a deliberate CIA manipulation of the American press."